

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

SP-02 SS-15 SY-05 OPR-02 A-01 CCO-00 /096 W

-----122545 071741Z /47

P R 071445Z AUG 78

FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1482

INFO AMEMBASSY COTONOU PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY BRAZZAVILLE

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY MONROVIA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

USMISSION GENEVA

USICA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIBREVILLE 2152

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PEPR, GB, DM

SUBJECT: BENIN SITUATION

REF: LIBREVILLE 2137 AND PREVIOUS

1. SITUATION AR LYCEE D'ESTUAIRE CAMP, WHICH HAD BEEN RELATIVELY CALM DURING WEEK, TURNED NASTY DURING LATE AFTERNOON, EARLY EVENING HOURS AUG 5. BENINESE ERUPTED FROM CAMP FOR REASONS NOT YET KNOWN TO US, BUT PROBABLY AS RESULT OF GROWING FRUSTRATION, ESPECIALLY BY TEENAGERS (WHO REPORTEDLY LED OUT-BREAK) AT STILL BEING THERE, ATTACKED AND STONED CARS AND ROUGHED UP PASSENGERS WHEN THEY COULD GET THEIR HANDS ON THEM.

2. VARIOUS STORIES ARE CIRCULATING IN LIBREVILLE RE RESULTS.

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FRENCH COUNSELOR OF EMBASSY, HOWEVER, HAS TOLD US THAT STRONG RETALIATION BY GABONESE IN EFFORT QUELL UPRISING RESULTED IN THREE DEAD (BENINESE), AND SOME 15 SERIOUSLY HURT. 33 VEHICLES WERE DAMAGED BY BENINESE. TWO EMBASSY MARINES WERE CAUGHT IN THEIR CAR BY CHANCE AS THEY WERE PASSING CAMP, BUT, EXCEPT FOR SOME MINOR DAMAGE TO CAR, MANAGED TO ESCAPE UNHURT. THEY REPORTED SEVERAL SHOTS FIRED IN AIR, USE OF TEAR GAS, AND ATTACKS

BY BENINESE ON PASSENGERS OF OTHER CARS. IN RESTORING ORDER, ARMY AND GENDARMES EVENTUALLY ENTERED CAMP, SEPARATED MALES FROM FEMALES, AND USED GUN BUTTS RATHER LIBERALLY. ONE RUMOR TO EFFECT THEY SEIZED OCCASION TO RELIEVE BENINESE OF WORLDLY GOODS WAS NOT, HOWEVER, CONFIRMED BY FRENCH COUNSELOR.

3. PROBLEM OF EVACUATING REMAINING BENINESE STILL REMAINS. CONTRARY TO OUR EARLIER INFORMATION, S/S CHRISTIAN VIELJEUX DID NOT RETURN TO LIBREVILLE AND IS APPARENTLY NOW AT POINT NOIRE. UTA FLIGHT TOOK SOME BENINESE OUT AUG 5 AND AIR AFRIQUE WILL PRESUMABLY TAKE SOME MORE AUG 7 (THESE MAY HAVE BEEN SPECIAL CHARTERS). MOBUTU WAS ANNOUNCED AS ARRIVING HERE AUG 5, BUT VISIT WAS REPORTED AS POSTPONED (FRENCH BELIEVE UNTIL AUG 10). ONE OF MAJOR PURPOSES OF CONTACT WITH MOBUTU NOW IS ALLEGEDLY TO SEEK AN ARRANGEMENT WITH ZAIRE TO USE ZAIRIAN C-130 TO TRANSPORT BENINESE. MEANWHILE, ACCORDING FRENCH COUNSELOR, FRENCH HAVE NOT BEEN SPECIFICALLY ASKED FOR TRANSPORT ASSISTANCE AS YET, BUT AMBASSADOR HAS BEEN SUMMONED BY PRES. BONGO MORNING AUG 7, AND THEY EXPECT THAT WILL BE SUBJECT OF DISCUSSION. COUNSELOR WAS VERY DUBIOUS ABOUT ANY POSITIVE OFFICIAL FRENCH REACTION.

4. COMMENT: AUG 6 PASSED MORE OR LESS QUIETLY. HEAVY SECURITY WAS WITHDRAWN IN MORNING, BUT SOME OF IT WAS IN EVIDENCE AGAIN IN EVENING CONTROLLING VEHICLES, PARTICULARLY TAXIS. BENINESE HAVE NOW BEEN IN CAMP TWO WEEKS AND, OF COURSE, LONGER THEY STAY, THE GREATER THE POTENTIAL FOR FURTHER VIOLENCE. TIGER THAT
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BONGO HAS BY TAIL IS GROWING INCREASINGLY FEROCIOUS, AND IT WILL BEHOOVE BONGO TO FIND WAYS AND MEANS OF GETTING BENINESE OUT AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE IF HE WISHES AVOID FURTHER TROUBLE AND IF HE WISHES MITIGATE BAD PUBLICITY THAT HAS ALREADY SURFACED FROM RETURNEES (E.G., COTONOU 1099 AND LAGOS 9595). SEPARATE PROBLEM IS THAT LONGER THERE IS TENSION, THE LESS IT LIKELY BENINESE WHOM GOG WANTS TO STAY WILL DO SO. FOR THEM, IT NO LONGER LIKELY MAKE DIFFERENCE WHO IS FUELING TENSION--IT ENOUGH TO KNOW IT EXISTS AND MAY VERY WELL LINGER LONG AFTER AFFAIR IS OVER. TIENKEN

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